

MA THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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THE SEVERANCE AND GRETA MILLIKIN COLLECTION **July 5 - September 2, 1990**

The Severance and Greta Millikin collection--one of the most important gifts of works of art ever made to The Cleveland Museum of Art--will be on exhibition at the Museum from July 5 through September 2, 1990. The exhibition includes works from their personal collection at "Ripplestone," their Gates Mills estate: Chinese and Japanese ceramics, Asian paintings and decorative objects, Southeast Asian sculpture, and European paintings, prints, drawings, and decorative arts.

This most generous bequest, as former Museum director Sherman E. Lee writes in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, can be divided into three parts. Its Chinese and Japanese ceramics constitute an internationally famous collection, a varied and carefully selected number of rare and valuable objects. The Southeast Asian sculptures--a Javanese lava stone head and a Hindu deity (a standing Mahadeva from India), among others--were gathered not as a collection but as single works too tempting to pass by, what Dr. Lee calls "targets of opportunity." The third group, primarily European works gathered as furnishings for their large and gracious home, were interesting, charming and, in some instances--such as the painting Hunting Party Resting among Ruins on the Italian Coast by Jan Baptist Weenix--important as well.

Beyond this collection of art that Severance and Greta Millikin lived with, they provided funds that enabled the Museum to purchase works of art for its permanent collection. Evan H. Turner, director of The Cleveland Museum of Art, records in his catalogue essay that they initially gave money to purchase specific objects, favoring

Asian works but occasionally funding the acquisition of a European decorative object, thereby reflecting the range of their personal collection. In 1971, they established The Severance and Greta Millikin Purchase Fund for the acquisition of art objects in any area, steadily contributing to it until it was significantly enriched at Mr. Millikin's death in 1985 and again in 1989 at Mrs. Millikin's death.

Severance Millikin was a member of a family dedicated to the realization of a great Museum for the city in which the family had flourished. His older cousin, John Long Severance, was from the outset an ardent supporter of the new Cleveland Museum; he gave the Museum medieval art and much of the armor in its popular Armor Court, served as third president of the Museum Board of Trustees from 1926 to 1935, and bequeathed one-half of his residual estate to the Museum on his death in 1936 for the purchase of works of art. He had named Severance Millikin trustee of his estate and had offered the Museum its choice of his personal collection. Perhaps the most monumental of that collection is the painting by J.M.W. Turner, Burning of the Houses of Parliament, which remains one of the Museum's greatest treasures.

In 1947 Severance Millikin became a trustee of the Museum and was to remain an active member of the Board longer than any other trustee in the Museum's history to date. He served on the finance committee and on the accessions committee, acting as its chairman during the years--"the halcyon years," Dr. Turner calls them--when, "thanks to Mr. (Leonard) Hanna, the extent of the Museum's acquisitions placed the Museum at the forefront in the international art market."

After Mr. Millikin's death, his widow became a member of the Board's accessions committee, to which she brought her professional knowledge and delight in the decorative arts. At her death she gave the Museum its choice of everything remaining at "Ripplestone." While an earlier joint gift in 1964 had brought to the Museum the greater part of their important objects, there were major works

remaining; all of these works, both the 1964 gifts and the 1989 bequest, are on view in the present exhibition. When the exhibition closes, the works will go to the specific departments that take responsibility for their care and study.

Dr. Turner ends his essay:

With this exhibition and its subsequent dispersal in the galleries of the Museum, the Millikin collection enters the public domain. It ceases to be a statement of their private happiness. For a time some will remember how affectionately Greta would narrate the tales and associations triggered by each object. Yet the effective placement of their treasures in the wonderfully civilized ambience of their house, Ripplestone, fades; although the sense of warm comfort, animated conversation, and a spectacular table remain. (Happily, Cervin Robinson's photograph captures in a masterful fashion the character of their great drawing room and suggests its wonderful view down the valley of the Chagrin River.) All of that is now gone, yes, but the great quality of that household, its standards of style and its generous commitment to many people and causes, is appropriately suggested in the particular quality of each object that the Millikins have given and bequeathed to the Museum which they and their family before them have so loved and supported.

The exhibition is free and open to the public, as is the Museum and all programs that accompany the exhibition.

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